8: Lužbetak E-4 (no date) 1951 RHI Caucasia RHI

[124] (1) Most of the Lesghian peoples were ruled by their own freely-elected elders independently of any prince. Of course, the Avars and the Laks had their khans,[121] while the Andi were subject to Kumykian and Avarian rulers.[122] After the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, chief native officials approved by the Military Government were known as *nā'ibs*.[123]

[565] [614] (2) Despite the fact that the Lesghian peoples have been subject to a more or less foreign aristocracy—the gradation being khan, bek, uzden, commoner and slave—[124] the people themselves remained essentially classless. Interest centred mainly around one's own sib. What generally determined precedence among the different sibs was, just as among the Chechens, not noble birth but the size of the sib.[125]

(3) Commoners.

[567] (4) Slaves. Lesghian slaves were usually prisoners taken in war or raids.[126] On paying a ransom or after a 10-year service or on marrying a Mohammedan the slave would be emancipated.[127]

The SOUTHERN CAUCASIANS. The complexity of the Georgian social classes surpasses even that of the Cherkess, a fact of which a mere glance [193] through King Vakhtang's Code will convince us.[128] It should be noted that the clergy do not form a distinct class; rather their class is determined by their ecclesiastical rank. In the following outline we shall also indicate the approximate social rank connected with the various ecclesiastical dignities.

(1) The King. The crown is inherited by the first-born male child. The *Catholicos* i. e., Patriarch of Iberia, ranks immediately after the King. (King Vakhtang's Code § 25.)

(2) Princes:

(a) The princes of the first order *(didebuli thavadi)*. Archbishops. (§ 26)
(b) Princes of the second order. Bishops. (§ 27)
(c) Princes of the third order and archimandrites. (§ 28)

(3) Nobles *(Aznauri)*:

(a) *Aznauri* of the first order and priors with the function of an abbot. (§ 29)

---

[121] Cf. Gadži-Ali, "Skazanie očevidca o Šamilě," SSKG, VII (1873), pp. 6.

[122] Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, II, p. 165.

[123] The word is derived from the Arabic *nā'ib*. The territory over which the naib was in charge we shall call "naibate". For an excellent description of a naib family see Halil Beg Mussayassul, *Das Land der letzten Ritter*, München, 1936.

[124] Cf. Svěčin, "Očerk narodonaselenija, nravov i obyčaev Dagestancev," ZKO, II (1853), p. 64.

[125] Cf. Enad-Bey, *Der Kaukasus, seine Berge, Völker und Geschichte*, p. 130.

[126] Klaproth, *Beschreibung der russ. Prov.*, p. 117.

[127] Reineggs, *op. cit.*, I, p. 87.
The social stratification of Daghestan has been treated in: A. Tomai, "Materialy k voprosu o feodalizme v istorii Dagestana," *Revoljucionnyj Vostok*, (Moscow, 1935), No. 5, pp. 116—137.

[128] Cf. Karst's edition, pp. 81—85.

sheep is slaughtered and a second feast is given at which the husband- and wife-to-be are present. The elder of the village *(khevis-beri)*[35] presides and then recites the special engagement prayer: "Glory to you, George, Angel of the Oak, Lasharis-Dzhbari, and Queen Tamara! George, Angel of the Oak, bless this young couple! Make them happy, rich and prosperous!"[35] After this the *mkepari*[36] are chosen from among the relatives of both partners, whose task it is to collect gifts for the betrothed. The Pshavs do not give their daughters a special dowry, these gifts and the *satavno* taking its place.[37] From now on the suitor is allowed to pay his future wife frequent visits.[38]

There is very little difference to be noted in the OSSETINE matchmaking and betrothal.[39] At first a good friend (generally a woman) of the young man's family is sent to the parents of the girl to learn, unnoticed if possible, about the possiblity of a marriage. If the "spy" returns with a favourable answer, two official matchmakers are sent, generally elderly friends of the family. All dealings are kept secret until the girl's father consents. The town-crier is then notified, for it is his duty and privilege to publicize all engagements. Then the matchmakers bring to the girl's family gifts and the *kalym*, and, as usual, the engagement is celebrated by a feast.[40]

The engagement customs of the KUMYKS are about the same as those of the Chechens.[41] In Balkaria it is the agreement regarding the *kalym* that constitutes the essence of the betrothal.[42]

2. Conclusions regarding Matchmaking and Betrothal

(1) All North Caucasians and immediate neighbours have the custom of formal betrothal of one sort or another. (2) Nowhere is the marriage arrangement a private affair. The two persons concerned are either passive, or if they do act, they are simply cooperating in a family matter. (3) Official go-betweens are usually employed. (4) The initiative is taken among all North Caucasians and neighbouring peoples by the male side. (5) Although the mother plays a surprisingly important part in the engagement customs, the final decision rests with the father.

The premarital arrangements of the Caucasians have a strongly patriarchal character. It is the father who has the final word in matchmaking. Moreover,

---

[35] Makalatija, *l. c.* The sacred oak referred to is supposed to be on Mount Lashari in the central part of Pshavia and is tied to heaven with a golden chain (Makalatija, *op. cit.*, p. 103).

[36] Makalatija, *l. c.*

[37] Every girl, while still small, receives a calf as her own property. All the profit she makes by raising the calf becomes her property too.

[38] Makalatija, *l. c.*

[39] Dubrovin, I, i, pp. 329—332.

[40] Hahn, *Bilder aus dem Kaukasus*, pp. 40 f.

[41] For a fine description of Kumykian matchmaking and engagement see Semenov, "Očerki narodnych obyčaev Kumykov Terskoj Oblasti," *Terskij Sbornik*, II (1892), No. 2, Part 2 pp. 68—71; Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, p. 637.

A. Karaulov, "Bolkari na Kavkaze," SMOMPK, XXXVIII (1908), No. 1, p. 146.

[42] [in Pshavia, southern Caucasia -- Analyst]